

Draft Environmental Assessment Wood's Ranch Wildlife Management Area Blowdown Salvage Project



**MONTANA FISH,
WILDLIFE & PARKS**



Region 1

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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Draft Environmental Assessment Checklist

Wood's Ranch Wildlife Management Area Blowdown Salvage Project

February 2020

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. Type of Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to conduct a timber salvage project on the Wood's Ranch Wildlife Management Area (WRWMA, Figures 1 and 2). The proposed project would include the use of mechanized timber harvest to remove merchantable blowdown timber as well as associated road maintenance work and reclamation activities. Please see #10 (Alternative B – Proposed Action) below, for a detailed description of the proposed action. Timber harvest and associated activities would abide by all applicable laws and Montana Forestry Best Management Practices¹ (BMPs).

2. Need for Action

On November 27, 2019, a major wind event hit northwest Montana, resulting in significant blowdown across the west side of the Whitefish Range and affecting the WRWMA. Most of the forested acreage on the WRWMA was impacted to varying degrees (Figure 3) with approximately 50 acres being severely impacted (Figures 4, 5 & 6).

The WRWMA is managed with the primary objective of providing deer and elk winter range habitat. Heavy accumulations of downed timber could restrict ungulate movement and access to browse in the blowdown area. Furthermore, downed trees attract Douglas-fir bark beetles (*Dendroctonus pseudotsugae*) and spruce bark beetles (*Dendroctonus rufipennis*). Infestation of downed timber in the spring/early-summer of 2020, when beetles mate and lay eggs under the bark, may facilitate infestation to adjacent live standing trees after the new generation of beetles (whose population has increased exponentially) overwinter under the bark and emerge during the spring/early-summer of 2021. Emerging beetles will attack susceptible live trees in adjacent stands, resulting in an outbreak. Outbreaks typically lasts 2 to 4 years depending on availability of susceptible host trees and weather conditions (such as drought which may prolong outbreaks or extreme cold which may kill the beetles).

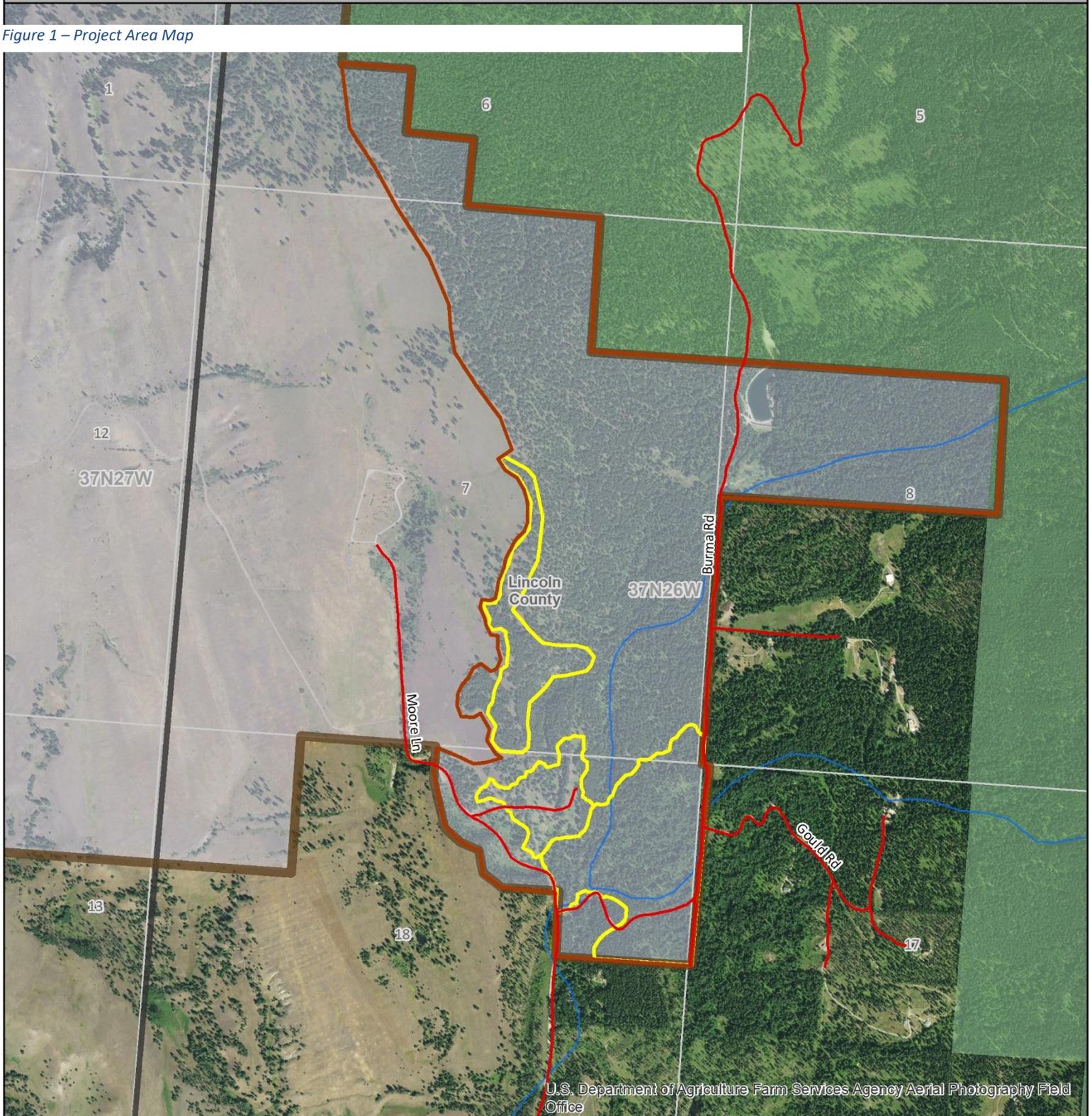
Heavy accumulations of downed trees also create a high fire hazard and present a barrier to fire suppression in the event of a wildfire. Potential timber value of downed trees rapidly declines from decay and wood-boring insects within the first year.

¹ Available on DNRC's website at <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/forestry-assistance/forest-practices/best-management-practices-bmp-2>, accessed 4 Feb 2020.

FWP is proposing to remove the blowdown trees by conducting a timber salvage in order to reduce accumulations of downed timber that could restrict ungulate movement in the blowdown area, reduce susceptibility of adjacent stands of trees to future bark beetle infestation, reduce fuel loading, and complete the work while the value of timber can cover the cost of the treatment. Any surplus revenue generated from this project could be used to fund future rehabilitation and forest management on the WRWMA as well as forest management work on other FWP properties across the state.

Project Area Map

Figure 1 – Project Area Map



U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Services Agency Aerial Photography Field Office

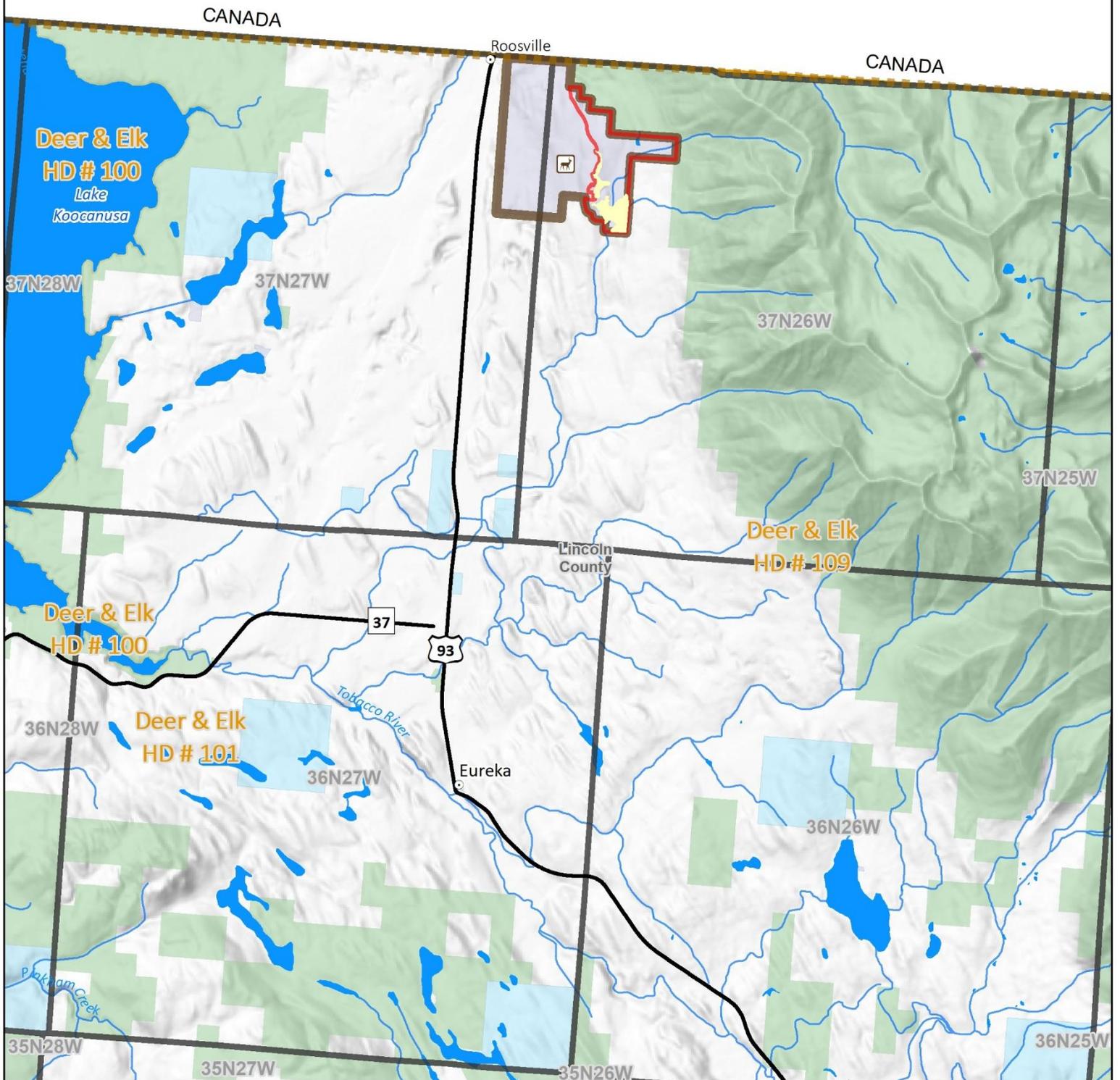
- Project Area
 - Proposed Treatment Units
 - Roads
 - Streams
 - US Forest Service
 - Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Scale 1:15,480
 1 in = 1/4 mile

Map Produced by: Jason Parke
 Habitat Bureau/Wildlife Division
 Wood's Ranch WMA Blowdown Salvage Project
 February 4, 2020



Vicinity Map

Figure 2 - Vicinity Map



- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Project Area | Hunting Districts (Deer, Elk, Lion) |
| Proposed Treatment Units | US Forest Service |
| Lakes | Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks |
| Highways | Montana State Trust Land |
| Streams | Wood's Ranch WMA |

Map Produced by: Jason Parke
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Figure 3 – Aerial image of moderate blowdown on the WRWMA



Figure 4 – Aerial image of severe blowdown in the SE corner of the WRWMA



Figure 5 – Aerial image of severe blowdown in the SE corner of the WRWMA



Figure 6 - Severe blowdown in the SE corner of the WRWMA



3. Name of Project:

Wood's Ranch Wildlife Management Area Blowdown Salvage Project

4. Location of Project

The 1,474-acre WRWMA is located 5.5 miles north of Eureka, Montana in Lincoln County (Figure 2). The property lies on the western edge of the Whitefish Range. The northern boundary of the WRWMA is the Canadian border. The proposed project area includes 445 acres in portions of Sections 6, 7, 8, & 18 of Township 37 North, Range 26 West.

5. Agency Authority for Proposed Action

FWP is authorized by law to own and manage lands as wildlife habitat. The land subject to this proposal is included in the Wood's Ranch Wildlife Management Area, which was originally deeded to FWP from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1982. FWP uses budgeted license revenues and P-R matching funds, within spending authority granted each biennium by the Montana legislature, for maintenance of the WRWMA. FWP is authorized to use supplemental funds from various public and private sources, which may be awarded under specific conditions for individual maintenance and enhancement projects on the WRWMA and other properties. The Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission endorsed this proposal in February 2020, allowing FWP to proceed with further development and analysis of this proposed action, including completion of this Environmental Assessment.

87-1-201(9)(a)(iv) and 87-1-621, MCA

FWP is required to implement programs that address fire mitigation, pine beetle infestation, and wildlife habitat enhancement giving priority to forested lands in excess of 50 contiguous acres in any state park, fishing access site, or wildlife management area under the department's jurisdiction. The Montana Legislature has provided FWP the means to accrue revenue from forest management activities and spend them to fund further management projects on its forested lands.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Forest Management Plan² (2018)

The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Forest Management Plan directs FWP to manage for desired habitat conditions and public use opportunities while maintaining the ecological integrity of forests. The plan provides a framework for developing desired future conditions (DFCs), identifies mechanical and non-mechanical treatments as management tools to achieve DFCs, and establishes guidelines for implementing forestry treatments on FWP forested lands.

6. Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency): Not Applicable

7. Anticipated Schedule

Public Comment Period: February 13 – March 13, 2020

² Available upon request from R1 FWP (Kalispell) or FWP Wildlife (Helena) office.

Decision Notice Published: March 23, 2020

Estimated Commencement Date: July 1, 2020

Estimated Completion Date: March 1, 2021 for the initial timber salvage and possibly extending to April 30, 2025 for potential follow-up treatments in the event of future bark beetle infestations.

Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 40%

8. Project size--estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

Land Type	Affected Area (estimated in acres)
(a) Developed:	
Residential	0
Industrial	0
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/ Recreation	0
(c) Wetlands/ Riparian Areas	0
(d) Floodplain	0
(e) Productive:	
Irrigated Cropland	0
Dry Cropland	0
Forestry	445
Rangeland	0
Other	0

9. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) **Permits:** none required

(b) **Funding:** Costs to FWP for implementing the proposed action are expected to be covered by the sale of merchantable timber byproduct. Any revenue in excess of project costs will be deposited in the Forest Management Account pursuant to the provisions of § 87-1-621, MCA.

(c) **Other Overlapping Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**

<u>Agency Name:</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility:</u>
Montana Dept. of Nat. Res. & Conservation	Streamside Management Zone Law
U.S. Forest Service	Fire Protection
Lincoln County	Weed Management
Montana State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural and Historic Resources

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative A: No Action

No timber salvage would be implemented on the WRWMA at this time. Downed trees would remain on the ground indefinitely. Adjacent live stands of trees would be at an increased susceptibility to bark beetle infestations for several years due to the likelihood of increasing bark beetle populations resulting from the infestation of downed trees. Ungulate movement would be restricted in the blowdown area. Heavy downed fuel would be a fire hazard and present a barrier to fire suppression in the event of a wildfire. Timber value would decline rapidly after the first year from decay and wood boring insects. FWP would not generate revenue from timber harvest for the Forest Management Account.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

FWP is proposing to conduct timber salvage treatments on approximately 86 acres within the 445-acre project area on the WRWMA. FWP is also proposing to monitor bark beetle infestation within the project area and remove infested trees for up to five years (through April 2025). The purpose of this project is to:

- reduce accumulations of downed timber that could restrict ungulate movement in the blowdown area;
- reduce susceptibility of adjacent stands of trees to future bark beetle infestation;
- reduce fuel loading and removing downed wood that may present a barrier to fire suppression in the event of a wildfire;
- sell resulting merchantable timber byproducts to offset the cost of tree removal before the trees lose commercial value; and

- if surplus revenue is generated from the project, use those funds to pay for future rehabilitation and forest management on the WRWMA as well as forest management work on other FWP properties across the state.

The proposed treatments are expected to benefit:

- elk and deer winter range and year-round foraging opportunities,
- cavity nesting nongame wildlife species (through the retention of broken top snags),
- compatible public use opportunities (such as hunting),
- adjacent forested stands that may be affected by increased susceptibility to bark beetle infestations,
- fire suppression efforts in the event of a wildfire,
- funding availability for future rehabilitation and forest management on the WRWMA and other forested FWP properties, and
- the local timber industry.

The proposed treatments would include:

- 86 acres of mechanical timber harvesting,
- monitoring of bark beetle infestation and removal of infested trees within the 445-acre project area for up to five years,
- log hauling and road maintenance on 2.0 miles of existing roads,
- prescribed burning (pile burning),
- rehabilitation of disturbed areas (such as grass seeding bare soils),
- noxious weed control, and
- tree planting (if needed).

Under this alternative, FWP would hire contractors to remove merchantable downed and wind-damaged trees. Live standing trees would not be removed unless the tree shows signs of being partially uprooted or the tree presents operational or safety issues. Dead standing trees (snags), and sub-merchantable trees would also be retained. Standing trees with high (10-20 feet tall) wind-broken tops would also be retained. FWP would also follow tree retention guidelines required for Streamside Management Zones³ (SMZ) as prescribed by the SMZ law in SMZs.

Following the initial salvage of downed and wind-damaged trees, FWP would continue to monitor bark beetle infestation in adjacent stands and potentially removed infested trees for up to five years (through April 2025). Removal of infested trees would depend on the economic feasibility of removal. Monitoring and follow-up treatments would be evaluated annually after Douglas-fir bark beetles (*Dendroctonus pseudotsugae*) and spruce bark beetles (*Dendroctonus rufipennis*) emerge (typically mid-April through early June). Tree removal would be implemented if deemed necessary to minimize localized outbreaks.

³ Available on the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) website at <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/docs/assistance/practices/sMZ-guide.pdf>, accessed 4 Feb 2020.

Tree removal would be accomplished through a combination of mechanized methods. Merchantable trees would be removed with a combination of ground-based logging (such as feller-bunchers and skidders) or cable yarding equipment. Trees would be cut and yarded to designated roadside locations (called "landings"). Tree stems would be delimbed and processed into logs. Logs would be loaded onto log trucks and hauled to local forest product manufacturing facilities. Slash (the nonmerchantable limbs and tree tops) and cull material generated from this process would be treated by either return skidding/yarding material into the unit, piling and burning, grinding or chipping, removing the material from the site, or a combination of those methods. Ground disturbance is expected on skid trails and at landing areas. Any ground disturbance (exposed, displaced, or compacted soils) would be rehabbed and reseeded with a native grass seed mix. Contractors hired to do this work would be required to adhere to Montana Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs). FWP would develop a site-specific treatment plan with contractors hired to do this work. This plan would identify resource protection measures to minimize impacts to the site. FWP would oversee the activities while they are on-going to ensure compliance with the plan and to minimize resource impacts.

Several Class 1 streams and SMZs occur within the proposed treatment units and there are heavy accumulations of downed trees across the stream channels. In order to achieve the project objectives, FWP is proposing to remove many of the trees that have blown down across these streams. In order to remove these trees, FWP has consulted with DNRC regarding SMZ law requirements. FWP would pursue an alternative practice (please see Rule 10 under the SMZ law guidebook) to remove trees that have fallen across the stream channels. If approved, FWP would require contractors to abide by the requirements of the alternative practice.

Access to the project areas would be from existing roads. Roads would be upgraded to the extent necessary to facilitate logging and log hauling while meeting BMPs. Temporary "jump-up" roads (relatively short spur roads) may be needed in some areas. These would be located on flat ground where excavation could be avoided. Ground impacts, such as more severe soil compaction or soil exposure, may be greater on these spur roads. These would be reclaimed and blocked to prevent unauthorized motorized use.

The initial timber salvage of 86 acres would occur between July 1, 2020 and March 1, 2021, in order to remove the trees before bark beetles can complete their life cycle in the downed/wind-damaged trees. The operating period for the proposed treatments would be restricted during big game general rifle season (mid-October through the end of November) in order to minimize impacts to users. Operations will also be restricted in the areas of less severe blowdown to avoid the early nesting periods (mid-February to end of April) of avian species such as great horned owls and great gray owls. Ground based logging equipment operating off roads would be required to operate under relatively dry, frozen, and/or snow-covered conditions in order to minimize impacts to soil and vegetation. Other clean-up and rehab activities such as road maintenance, slash treatment, and grass seeding could potentially occur throughout the year. If slash is piled and burned, burn piles would be located in openings away from residual trees and neighboring property lines. Burning would be conducted in accordance with open burning seasons and applicable state and county regulations.

Road work and logging activities would comply with Montana Forestry BMPs and the Montana SMZ law. To minimize the spread of noxious weeds; all equipment would be cleaned and inspected by FWP before moving onto the FWP lands. Exposed bare mineral soils would be reseeded immediately and any weed infestations would be treated with herbicides indefinitely through annual weed management efforts.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		Yes	1b
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

1b. Timber harvest would adhere to Montana Forestry BMPs to minimize soil compaction and displacement. Ground-based equipment would be restricted to periods of frozen or snow-covered conditions. Existing skid trails would be utilized if they are in suitable locations to minimize soil physical disturbance.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		Yes	2ab
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X		Yes	2ab
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		X				
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2ab. Slash pile burning would introduce particulate matter into the local airshed which may temporarily affect local air quality. The majority of slash and sub-merchantable material would be left on the forest floor to minimize the amount of slash to be piled and burned. Burning would be conducted in accordance with open burning timing restrictions and comply with slash treatment regulations. Dust may be created from log hauling on existing native surface road. Contract clauses would provide for the use of dust abatement or requiring trucks to reduce speed, if necessary.

3. <u>WATER</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		Yes	3bd
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?			X		Yes	3bd
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		X				
n. Other:						

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Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3b,d. Treating the subject stands may slightly alter the rate and volume of spring runoff and retained snowpack. Given the limited scale of the project and condition of adjacent stands, this effect is expected to be minor. The project would implement Montana Forestry BMPs to minimize any potential risk of sediment delivery to water resources. Additionally, operations within existing SMZs will retain an adequate amount of downed timber (esp. non-merchantable timber) across stream channels to maintain large woody debris recruitment, reduce downstream sedimentation and maintain cool water temperatures.

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		No	4ab
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X		No	4ab
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4ab. The project would decrease the amount of downed/wind-damaged trees on the WRWMA. Live standing trees, sub-merchantable trees, and snags (dead standing trees) would be retained. Removal of the downed and wind-damaged trees would reduce the susceptibility of adjacent stands to future bark beetle infestation and mortality and reduce the fuel hazard in the event of a wildfire.

4e. Ground disturbance associated with road use and maintenance and operating equipment off-road has the potential to create areas that would allow for the establishment or spread of noxious weeds. Noxious weed spread will be mitigated by requiring equipment to be washed and inspected before entering the WRWMA, minimizing ground disturbance through the implementation of Montana Forestry BMPs, reseeding disturbed areas with a native grass seed mix, and implementing noxious weed management treatments.

** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X		Yes	5bcg.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X		Yes	5bcg.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X		No	5bcg.
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)			X		No	5h.
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		X				

** 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
j. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish and Wildlife:

5bcg. Proposed treatments may temporarily disrupt seasonal habitat use patterns of elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer within the project area, though with minimal-to-no impacts on populations. In the areas with the most severe blowdown, ungulate movement is presently restricted. Removal of downed trees would reopen access to the area and available forage. Any temporary “jump roads” needed to access downed timber would be reclaimed to prevent illegal access to the WRWMA. All equipment used in this proposed action would be cleaned to prohibit the spread of invasive weeds, which can impact important native grassland forage.

While the relatively small size and duration of the proposed action will result in minimal impacts to non-game species, some cavity nesting birds and mammals, or those that forage on dead or dying trees, may be negatively impacted by the removal of downed timber. Therefore, leaning snags that form ramps from the forest floor into standing trees, broken-top trees, and non-merchantable timber would be retained. Some avian species which establish early spring home ranges (i.e. great horned owls and great gray owls) may be temporarily displaced during proposed treatments. Any observed active nests would be left undisturbed until nesting is completed.

5h. Grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*) occasionally frequent the area during their non-hibernating season and the proposed action may temporarily disrupt seasonal habitat use patterns within the project area. However, the proposed action is expected to have no impact on overall grizzly bear behavior, populations, or habitat.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		No	6ab
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?			X		No	6ab
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Effects (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6ab. Residences are located within 1/4 mile of the project area. The WRWMA is open to the public from May 15 through December 2 annually. Except on designated open roads and county roads, public access to the WRWMA is by non-motorized travel and the area is used in the spring through fall by the public for hiking, hunting, and wildlife viewing. Logging and trucking equipment will increase noise levels within the project area during the operating periods.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Use (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X			8ac.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X	X			8ac.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8ac. Timber management activities are inherently dangerous. All contractors would be required to comply with federal and state safety standards for logging operations. Contractors would be required to carry spill kits and, in the event of an oil/fluid spill, be responsible for spill reporting and cleanup.

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?			X		No	9de
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		No	9de
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impact (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

9de. This Project will create local jobs while the project is ongoing thus benefiting the successful contractor. Log hauling and contractor traffic will increase during the project. Roads and other infrastructure that will be used by contractors were designed (and will be maintained) to support commercial logging and log transport activities.

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?			X		No	10b

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?			X		No	10d
e. **Define projected revenue sources			X			10e
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.			X			10f
g. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10b. The Project will increase state and local tax revenues from the sale of fuel and equipment and from employees' income.

10d. Fuel and electricity will be required to treat stands and process the timber byproduct.

10e. Depending on the market conditions of logging costs, hauling costs, and delivered log prices for forest products at the time the timber is sold, the project may generate revenue for FWP's Forest Management Account to be used for future forest management projects.

10f. Post-treatment maintenance costs may be incurred for slash disposal, revegetation, and noxious weed treatments. FWP would provide funding for maintenance costs from its Forest Management Account and other authorized sources.

** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
			X		No	1a

** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?						
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)		X				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

1a. Some harvested areas may be visible from adjacent private residences and will be noticeably more open compared to unharvested areas. The aesthetic value of these areas has already been severely altered as a result of the wind event.

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		12d				

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12d FWP would consult with the State Historic Preservation office (SHPO) on this proposed project and avoid altering heritage properties or paleontological remains. If cultural artifacts were to be discovered during the project, FWP would cease activities and contact SHPO, and potentially adjust the project design to avoid impacting these resources.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:						
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)						
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Significance Criteria (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PART III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COLLABORATORS

1. Public Involvement

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current environmental assessment (EA):

- Public notices in each of these papers: *Tobacco Valley News*, *Flathead Beacon*, *Helena Independent Record*
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("Recent Public Notices")
- Copies of this EA may be obtained by mail from FWP Region 1 Office, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901; by phoning 406-751-4579; or by emailing Stevie.Burton@mt.gov.

Comments should be directed by: mail to Ethan Lula, PO Box 2084, Eureka, MT 59917; phone to 406-882-4109; or email to Ethan.Lula@mt.gov. Comments must be received by FWP no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 13, 2020.

Notice of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

PART V. EA PREPARATION

- 1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? No**
If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

No. Based upon the above assessment which has identified a limited number of minor impacts to the physical and human environment that will be either for a short duration or that the effects of the proposed project can be mitigated below the level of significance, an EIS is not required and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of review.

- 2. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:**

Ethan Lula, Wildlife Biologist, Eureka, MT, 406-882-4109
Jason Parke, Forester, Helena, MT, 406-444-7329

- 3. List of entities consulted during preparation of the EA**

Jeremy Rank, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Libby, MT